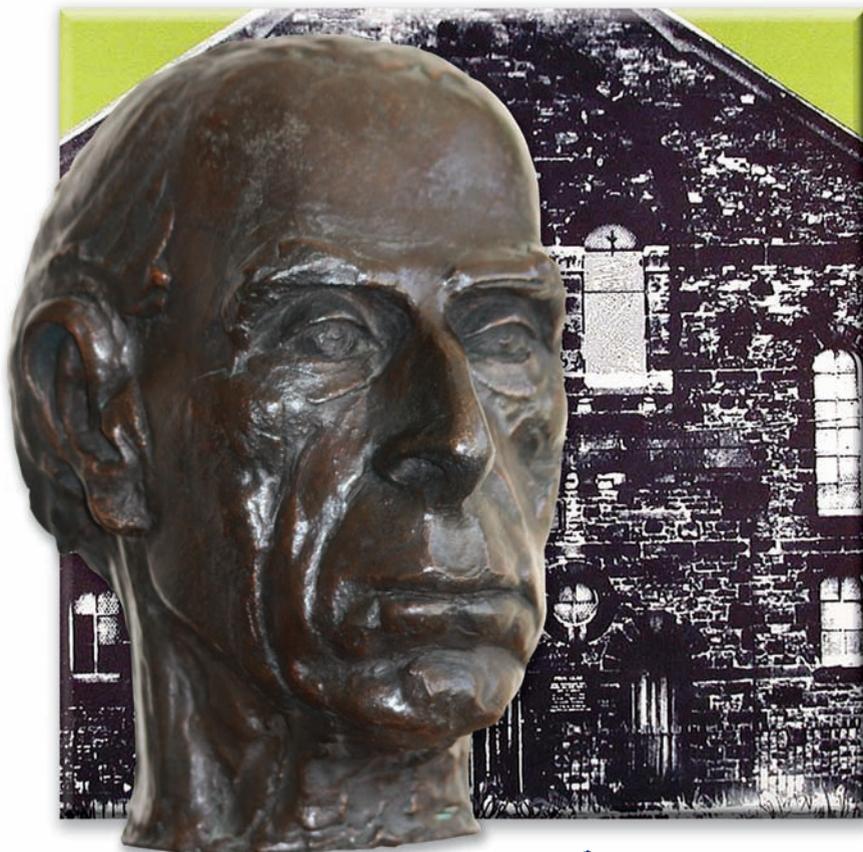


John Piper

at Epsom College
A Collection of Works



EPSOM
COLLEGE

John Piper

A Message from the Head of the John Piper Art School at Epsom College, Mrs Katie Lenham

“ **John Piper (Holman 1919-22):** English Romantic landscape painter, wartime artist and designer, his career was vast, varied and prolific. He was an artist who embraced innovation, whilst embedding it firmly in the traditions of British art and culture. His enthusiasm and interests enabled him to develop skills in textile, architectural glass, theatre design, printing, painting, illustration and graphics. Figurative artwork developed into abstraction and back again as he explored subject matter and materials without inhibition.

There are many others who are far better placed than I am to comment on the length and breadth of John Piper's career. However, I do know that as a teacher I constantly refer pupils to Piper's use of colour, materials and his progression of ideas. As a student painter, I constantly drew inspiration from his work. Through John Piper's connection at Epsom College and our collection of Piper works that was so greatly enhanced by the recent Camac Bequest, pupils (and visitors) now have the exceptional opportunity to view examples from across this astonishing career, absorbing some of Piper's practice into their own. ”



John Piper (Holman 1919-22)

A NOTE OF THANKS

The Education Trust would like to thank Dr Geoffrey Bonner-Morgan (Carr 1946-50) a retired General Practitioner and great admirer of John Piper, who wrote this leaflet. Coincidentally, his late uncle, Richard Bonner-Morgan (Carr 1920-23) was a contemporary of John Piper at Epsom College.

The 2010 bequest of Piper works by Mr Robert Camac

In 2010 Epsom College received a bequest of 12 Piper works from the late Mr Robert Camac (Granville 1938-42). Mr Camac and his partner, Mr Michael Northen, the notable lighting designer, received, as a gift from Piper, a single work of considerable value. The friendship arose from Northen's and Piper's theatrical collaborations but Camac and Piper had Epsom College in common.

Years later, following the death of Mr Northen, Mr Camac decided to make this bequest to Epsom College, and sold the work. Former Headmaster, Tony Beadles, explains, "He exchanged the more valuable work for a collection of screen prints and lithographs on the basis that artists at the College would learn more from a series of works than just one. In so doing, he has created a splendid collection and a valuable resource for pupils." In accordance with Mr Camac's wish that his gift be displayed in one venue, his collection hangs in the Epsom College Library.

Mr Camac was a solicitor and partner from 1951 to 1986 at Ranken Ford and Chester, which was eventually amalgamated with Bird and Bird. He served as Master of the Worshipful Company of Woolmen in 1976. His younger brother, the late Dr John Camac, was a member of Granville from 1941 to 1945.

John Piper

WORKS IN THE LIBRARY

John Piper, Michael Northen and The Stage

John Piper collaborated with the composer Benjamin Britten on several operas, with his energies mainly directed towards stage design. In these photographs, we see some of Piper's work for the 1951 production of the Britten opera "Billy Budd", the action of which takes place on board an 18th century British naval vessel.

Piper designed whole-stage sets (*as in photo 1*), and a model for the upper deck scenes on the warship "Indomitable" (*photo 2*). We can also appreciate the contribution of Piper's friend and colleague, Michael Northen, the notable lighting designer. The three sections of *photo 1* show the progression from Piper's initial design drawings for the between-decks set to an illustration of the lighting for the set and to the final overall stage setting with the cast.

Donkey Heads and Palm Fronds

When faced with this set of drawings and an accompanying letter, we can only guess at the underlying scenario. It is likely that Michael Northen was planning a theatrical, or perhaps an amateur theatrical, performance centred on Palm Sunday. John Piper's reply to the request for appropriate illustrations seems to indicate a degree of uncertainty on his part as to the result, but his favoured Donkey's Head is surely a great success.

Many of Piper's works are held in the Tate Archives at Tate Britain, including sketches, drawings and letters such as these.



Magi, La Charité-sur-Loire, Ste Croix

Printed as a lithograph 1976. Here the image of the Magi, or Three Wise Men, is copied from stonework within this French church. The skill of the mediaeval stone-carver is revealed in the original of this early piece of art, where a sense of forward momentum is brought to the group of figures. Piper's introduction of contrasting yellow colouration tends to emphasise the pleasing quirkiness of the piece. The subject itself, rather scroll-like in composition, may have been part of a tomb or font decoration.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 255

Figures from a Seal

Printed as an aquatint 1954, this is an early Piper print. Executed in both black and white, and hand-painted coloured versions, it originally formed part of a book published by Faber & Faber. There is a nice decorative flow to this image.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 88

Blenheim Gates

This representation of the gates at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire was printed as an etching in 1983. The jewel-bright colours create strong contrasts that add to the atmosphere of the piece. When Piper celebrated his 80th birthday in 1983, this print, along with seven others, was incorporated into a portfolio entitled *The Eightieth Birthday Portfolio*.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 358

St Germain de L'ivret

Printed as a screenprint 1983. It was included in the *Eightieth Birthday Portfolio*.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 357

Stowe, South of the House

Printed as a screenprint 1986. Stowe House, a stately home, was rescued from destruction by the creation of Stowe School in 1923. The old House became the nucleus around which additional school buildings were developed (architect Clough Williams-Ellis). Immediately adjacent to the school grounds lie Stowe Landscape Gardens, which were formerly part of the Estate, but which, since 1990, have been owned by the National Trust. The print reflects



ABOVE TOP: **Magi, La Charité-sur-Loire, Ste Croix.** LEFT TO RIGHT: **Blenheim Gates; St Germain de L'ivret**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: **Stowe, South of the House; Chiesa della Salute; Gothic Folly, Stowe; Les Junies**

both the architectural grandeur and the imposing scale of the subject. Abstraction and detail are combined to good effect.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 387

Les Junies

Printed as an etching and aquatint 1988. Piper made working trips to France and Italy. The subject of this print is a large rambling property in France. Strong green colour frames the buildings, hinting at a lush landscape.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 411

Chiesa della Salute

An example of Piper's textile design. The printed image was transferred onto fabric and the resulting product marketed commercially by

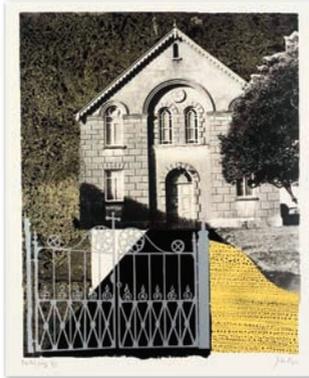
the company Arthur Sanderson. It is fascinating here to see the relationship between Fine Art and Applied Art. Piper's fabric design uses a soft colour palette but is still beautifully drawn. This exhibit would have been a proof copy prior to production. The Chiesa (or Basilica) della Salute is a church in Venice.

Not formally catalogued

Gothic Folly, Stowe

Printed as an etching 1985. Piper portrayed a number of the views and the other attractions, such as the thirty or so temples and monuments that are to be found in Stowe Landscape Gardens, Buckinghamshire. This print shows one of the larger monuments. Strong red-browns predominate.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 376



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: **Crug Glas, Swansea**; **Pennybont Ford Congregational Church**; **Dylwyn Church**; **Eye and Camera**, **Blue to Yellow**; **Anglesey Bay**

WORKS IN THE JOHN PIPER ART SCHOOL

Crug Glas, Swansea

Printed as a lithograph 1966. During their lives, Piper and his wife Myfanwy made many visits to Wales, and for a while owned a property in Pembrokeshire. Small Welsh churches and chapels, such as the one shown here, were a frequent choice of subject in the early phase of Piper's work in Wales.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 173

Pennybont Ford Congregational Church

Printed as a screenprint 1966. Worthy of mention is the unusual and effective "oil and

water" patterning achieved on the yellow block of colour. Different colour versions of the print exist.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 176

Dylwyn Church

Printed as a lithograph 1966. The perspective is from the graveyard area, but the scene nevertheless manages to be lively and charged with interest.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 177

Eye and Camera, Blue to Yellow

Printed as a screenprint 1967. When the images that make up the Eye and Camera series began appearing in the 1960s, they were found by some of Piper's followers to be a

somewhat startling departure from the artist's more familiar topographical work. Different colour versions exist.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 181

Given to remember Dr JY Pincus 1901-1947

Anglesey Bay

Printed as a lithograph 1963. This work is a reminder that in an earlier part of his career, Piper's output was almost entirely abstract in nature. By the end of the 1930s, however, his work became predominantly representational and figurative, with the emphasis on landscape and architecture. This example, appearing at the time it did, is an exception to that general rule.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 120

Given to remember Dr JY Pincus 1901-1947

Welsh Landscape

This watercolour dates from the 1950s and uses a palette of blue, green, yellow and black. There is an overlay of the painterly dashes and dots that are a familiar feature of the artist's work.

Given to remember Dr JY Pincus 1901-1947

WORKS IN THE HEADMASTER'S STUDY & RECEPTION

Wymondham and South Lopham

When Piper devotes the whole height of his picture to a church tower, the result can be truly impressive. Studies such as this pair of prints, showing churches at Wymondham and South Lopham, are examples of some of his most highly regarded work.

Both churches are in Norfolk; the small town of Wymondham lies to the south west of Norwich and the village of South Lopham lies between Thetford and Diss. Both exhibits were printed as screenprints, in 1971 and 1976 respectively.

Catalogue entries: Levinson 205 and 264 respectively. *Gifts from an anonymous legacy through the RMF of Epsom College*

Dorchester Abbey, Dorchester-on-Thames

Printed as a Lithograph in the 1970s. This beautiful and historic Abbey can be said to have a special place in the history of Christianity in England. Here, in Saxon times, the baptism of the King of Wessex by the Pope's envoy played an all-important part in setting up the enduring link between the Church and Royalty in this country.

The view shows the Great East Window in the foreground, filling the whole of the end of the church, and the print itself is unusual in that, as far as we know, it was specifically created by Piper as a contribution to the church's restoration fund in the mid-1970s. This print, surviving from what was probably a very limited initial production is certain to be quite rare.



Dorchester Abbey, Dorchester-on-Thames

Piper, who had a lifelong love of churches and a strong interest in their history and preservation, had a great admiration and respect for those who, preceding him in Victorian times, shared his own enthusiasm and involvement – among them the architect William Butterfield, whom we know carried out restoration work on this church in 1846-53.

Not formally catalogued

Given to remember Dr JV Pincus 1901-1947

Gothic Folly, Stowe

Printed as an etching 1985. Piper portrayed a number of the views and the other attractions, such as the thirty or so temples and monuments that are to be found in Stowe Landscape Gardens, Buckinghamshire. This print shows one of the larger monuments. Strong red-browns predominate.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 376

Given to remember Dr JV Pincus 1901-1947

WORKS IN THE COMMON ROOM DINING ROOM

Duchêne Fountain, Blenheim

Printed as a screenprint 1989. As in so many of Piper's works, examples of bold colour choices abound. Here stormy skies lie above the artist's confident and considered contrasting of the blue-grey fountain and yellow background buildings.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 418



Harlech Castle

Harlech Castle

Printed as a screenprint 1989. The brooding grandeur of the castle – one of King Edward I's "Iron Ring" of powerful Welsh castles built in the thirteenth century – is plain to see. The view we see in the print is of the massive twin-towered gatehouse on the landward side of the castle. In the distant past, as was usual with Edward's fortifications of the period, it was possible to bring in provisions to the occupants via the sea, at that time much closer than it is now. However, this would have involved using a fortified pathway scaling the precipitous cliff on which the castle stands.

Catalogue entry: Levinson 414

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John Piper